Engaging parents and carers

Many safeguarding incidents take place at home. Schools have a responsibility for keeping children safe and therefore online safety should be one of the most important issues on which schools should engage with parents.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING PARENTS

- **Building parent confidence** Online safety can be an area in which parents lack confidence and so they may need additional support and advice, such as via the school website, section in a newsletter, school sessions from your e-team, or an open door policy for parents to share concerns. Always emphasise the idea of applying good offline parenting *online*. For example, ask similar questions about online behaviour as you would about offline behaviour.
- **Developing boundaries for the whole family** Include information on appropriate amounts of screen time, limiting tech at bedtime and mealtimes and age-appropriateness of games and films. Always invite parents to share boundaries they already use; great ideas and tips are often already in use.
- **Supporting the positive use of technology** Promote the idea of giving children ideas for free purposeful resources such as Scratch, Scratch Jr and the creation of films. Encourage children to be creative, not consumers! See www.commonsensemedia.org
- **Modelling appropriate use of technology** Encourage parents to model positive behaviour online and in and around the school to reinforce positive behaviour in children. (Latest commentary suggests that parents are the worst culprits when it comes to demonstrating bad habits.)
- **Engagement of parents should stem from school policy and education, using pupils wherever possible** For example, classroom projects on online safety such as PEGI ratings and positive online behaviour can be shared with parents at school assemblies, or by your e-team at events such as a Safer Internet Day.

RUNNING ONLINE SAFETY SESSIONS WITH PARENTS

There are a number of examples and ideas for what to include in sessions for parents. See:

- www.saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day

Making your parent sessions a success

- Tie these sessions in with existing activities such as parents evening, or coffee mornings, or a class assembly slot to ensure a higher take-up.
- Parent sessions require marketing; use posters, newsletters and social media to promote them. You may even wish to send children outside with placards promoting the sessions when parents are dropping off children for school.
- The title you use for your parent sessions is important. You are likely to get a higher number of parents attending with session titles such as 'Tech and parenting' rather than 'Online safety session'.
- Get children involved, including your e-team.
- Start the session by promoting positive use of technology.
- Encourage parents to be authoritative: reassure parents that a lot of online safety is about common sense.

- Encourage parents to share ideas: for example, what boundaries do they have in place already?
- Share findings from online safety surveys.
- Talk about the opportunities that technology affords children and how it can have a powerful and positive effect on their futures.
- Finish the session with children demonstrating examples of good resources and tech (this might be in the classroom).

LINKING TO THE UNITS

Parental engagement is promoted in all units of this resource through the following sections:

- *Engaging parents and carers*: summary of how grown-ups can be engaged in the content of the unit.
- *Taking it further*: follow-up ideas for home (and school).

Dedicate a section of your school newsletter to an aspect of online safety. (See the *Getting ready* section of each unit for text you may wish to paste into your school newsletter.)